

Frequently Asked Questions About: Chafee Grant Program Administration

Basic Questions

Where can I get basic information on the Chafee Grant Program?

The California Student Aid Commission (Commission) has launched the following website in order to provide information on the Chafee Grant Program: <http://www.chafee.csac.ca.gov>

Can we get a copy of the PowerPoint file for the presentation that took place on April 20, 2004?

The file was emailed to all registered participants. It is also available on the Commission's website at www.csac.ca.gov; click on the links for Schools – Colleges – Training – Chafee. For those that didn't have an opportunity to attend, the session was recorded and a link to the archive is also available in the same place.

How can I get brochures or flyers on this grant?

Brochures and flyers for the program were sent to all schools. Additional copies are still available and can be requested by sending an email to: specialized@csac.ca.gov.

Are the awards really being distributed on a "First Come – First Served" basis this year?

Yes. Because this program is being implemented so late into the fiscal year, we are awarding students on a first come-first served basis to expedite the award process. California received an allocation of \$8 million for the 2003-04 fiscal year and needs to expend the full amount.

What are the minimum and maximum award amounts for the Chafee Grant?

The award amount ranges from \$10 to \$5,000 depending on the student's unmet need. The full amount of unmet need, up to the maximum of \$5,000 will be awarded to any student meeting the eligibility requirements. Funds will be disbursed until the full \$8,000,000 allocation is gone.

Who does a school call if they have questions?

Schools should contact the Commission's Customer Service staff at (888) 224-7268 with any questions.

How are eligible students identified? Will the Commission notify these students of their potential eligibility?

The California Department of Social Services (CDSS) provided the Commission with a list of students who are in the correct age range and were eligible for Independent Living Program (ILP) services. The Commission then matched that list against the 2003-04 FAFSA records that have been received. Students who were on the list and had filed a FAFSA were then added to WebGrants and included on the Need Analysis report sent to the school. A letter was also sent to the student encouraging them to file an application.

What happens to students who are on the CDSS list but did not file a FAFSA? Does anyone contact them?

Yes, the Commission sends a letter to the student requesting that he/she complete a 2003-04 FAFSA.

How hard will we try to find a student? It was pointed out that these students move often!

Both the Commission and the schools will try to locate the student. It is the student's responsibility to keep us informed of all address/name changes. Using the ILP coordinator or former foster provider addresses might be a good suggestion. ILP staff has also informed the Commission that these students are frequently intimidated by the financial aid process and are hesitant to ask for help. Schools may have to take extra steps in identifying and supporting these students.

Chafee Application Questions

What are the application requirements?

There are three components of the student's application. A student must file the Chafee Program application, complete the FAFSA, and appear on the CDSS list of eligible students. In addition, the school must complete a Needs Analysis form.

What is the URL for the online application? Do students have to apply online or can they mail/fax the form?

Students can obtain information about the program, including an online application at www.chafee.csac.ca.gov. Students can file online or they can print and mail in the paper form. Since we are dealing with a limited resource, we advise that students file ASAP. Applications can also be faxed; the Specialized Programs fax number is (916) 526-7977.

How does a student file a FAFSA without an SSN?

Students who do not have an SSN, and hence cannot formally file a FAFSA, will be processed manually. The student should have their school perform a manual needs analysis calculation to get an unmet need. The Commission will send a paper Need Analysis Report with our assigned ID number for the school to provide this unmet need. Schools can use whatever resources available to them to produce the student's unmet need. The paper Need Analysis Report should be returned to the Commission for processing.

CDSS has created a list of ILP eligible students to send to the Student Aid Commission. What if a student is not on that list?

Students not on the CDSS list are sent an ILP Eligibility Certification Form. They must sign Section I, authorizing the ILP Coordinator to provide the information the Commission needs to update our records. If the students are in need of assistance, the Commission has a list of County ILP coordinators and their addresses. The ILP Coordinators complete Section II and forward the form to the CDSS for them to sign and authorize CDSS eligibility.

When does the school receive the Needs Analysis form?

Once the Commission has an application, ISIR and CDSS match, the Need Analysis Report is sent to the schools. However, the school can complete the Need Analysis on WebGrants prior to the cross match.

How will the student and the school be notified of the award?

An award letter is sent to the student notifying them of the award. At the same time the check (in the student's name) is sent to the financial aid office with disbursement sheets. The school must verify half-time enrollment, satisfactory academic progress (SAP), and financial aid eligibility before releasing funds.

Eligibility Criteria and Verification of Eligibility

How does a student become eligible for a Chafee Grant?

Students must be ILP eligible between their 16th and 18th birthdays, currently enrolled half-time at an eligible college or vocational school in a program at least one year in length and have financial aid eligibility.

What steps does the school need to take to verify a student's eligibility?

The school must complete the Need Analysis Report either on WebGrants or paper, and verify financial aid eligibility (unmet need up to \$5000), half-time enrollment, and that the student is maintaining SAP. The school does NOT need to verify the student's ILP eligibility.

What is the definition of a program "one year in length?" Does this refer to an academic year or a calendar year?

The program must be one academic year in length. If the program meets the federal definition of an academic year, then the program meets the requirements of the Chafee Grant Program.

What is an eligible institution?

An eligible institution is a federal Title IV eligible school.

Does a student have to be a California resident to qualify?

No. Youth who "age out" of another state's foster care program and subsequently reside in California are eligible to apply for the Chafee services.

What type of verification would non-resident students need to provide for foster status?

The student should contact the Commission and request an ILP Certification Form. The form must be completed in order for the Commission to determine foster status. This is also true for residents that did not appear on the initial CDSS list.

Can a student on a VISA get the Chafee grant?

Yes, if all of the eligibility criteria are met, there is no citizenship restriction. However, these students will be processed manually if they do not have a social security number.

Does 'SAP' refer to financial aid SAP or overall school Standards of progress?

The requirement refers to financial aid SAP.

Does the Commission want to be informed if a student is not maintaining Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP), and if so, how do we report it?

If a student is not making SAP, schools should notify the Commission by either making a note on paper Need Analysis Report or by marking the appropriate box on the WebGrants Need Analysis screen. If a check has already been issued, then it should be returned to the Commission with a note indicating the reason the student is ineligible.

Can students who already have a Bachelor's degree receive this Grant?

Yes, there is no restriction that the student must be working on their first degree. Students are eligible to receive the grant up until their 23rd birthday.

What if a student is now married with children, are they still eligible?

Yes. There is nothing that prohibits a married student from receiving a Chafee Grant.

Need Analysis

The listing that the Commission sent doesn't contain any social security numbers. How am I supposed to identify the student if I have more than one student with the same name?

The mailing of any document containing a social security number is prohibited by law. While this new law is being phased in for the Commission's existing programs, all new programs are required to comply with the law. A Student ID has been assigned to each student. When you access the student's record on WebGrants using the Student ID, the student's demographic information will be displayed. This additional data should allow you to identify the student.

The deadline on the Need Analysis Report that I received has passed; can I still submit it?

Yes! We will continue making awards as long as there are remaining funds.

Where did CSAC get the pre-filled amounts and why can't I change them?

Cost of attendance data was obtained from the school's 2003-04 Cost Estimate form. If the pre-filled data does not match the actual budget, make an adjustment using the "other" field. The objective is to have the same "unmet need" on the report as the school records so that the Commission will not over or under award the student.

What if the school is using a lower budget than what CSAC has pre-filled?

If the budget is lower than the Commission's, the FAO will need to send in the paper need analysis report for a manual adjustment. Once again, the goal is to have the same unmet need. If the unmet need is well over \$5000, report it on WebGrants because the student will not be awarded more than \$5000.

Should schools report need for students who are fully packaged already?

Yes, if the student's loan balances can be reduced or if the student has unearned work study.

When will be the last day for CSAC to send out the need analysis to the school for the academic year 03/04?"

The Commission will continue to process applications until August 30 or until the funds are depleted, which ever occurs first.

Do they have to use all other aid first? Like loans?

The Chafee grant should be packaged like other financial aid. Schools can return or reduce loan funds and work study to accommodate the grant.

If the student is enrolled half-time, must we prorate the Chafee grant the way we prorate the Cal Grant?

No proration is required for the Chafee award. The school should calculate the unmet need based on half-time status. If the student has sufficient need they are eligible for the full award amount.

Can you discuss adding in summer costs?

Schools may make cost of attendance adjustments based on budget to accommodate a summer term. If the student has already received payment, then schools should adjust the award on paper only.

If a student has already received Chafee funds (less than the maximum amount) and later decides to attend summer school, can the student receive additional funds for summer?

Yes, the school should submit a paper Need Analysis Report with the updated COA and the previous award amount.

If the need analysis has been completed but included loans or other aid that could have been refunded, can a new need analysis be submitted so that the student may receive additional funds?

Yes, the school should return the check and send a new Need Analysis Report (paper) with the correction.

Disbursement of Funds

What is the stale date period on state checks?

The checks must be cashed/deposited within one year.

If a check is returned to us uncashed how long does the student have to reclaim it?

Returned checks are immediately sent back to accounting as abatements. The Commission may reorder a check, if necessary.

Right now we receive checks for disbursements; will we eventually be able to receive funds electronically?

We haven't set up electronic transfer of funds. It is something we can discuss if there is funding for future years.

Will the checks require a school to co-sign?

The check is issued only to the student. It is, however, mailed to the school. The school should verify enrollment and SAP prior to disbursing the check to the student.

What if student enrollment dropped after the funds have been disbursed to the student?

Once the funds have been disbursed, there is no requirement that they be refunded if the student's enrollment status changes.

Renewal of Chafee Awards

When will the Commission know if funding will be available for 2004-2005?

CDSS will notify us. We really don't know when the final approval will be received. For this program we are dealing with both State and Federal budgets!

Will there be an automatic renewal letter sent out to Chafee eligible students telling them about the grant?

Decisions on how renewal award will be handled have not yet been made. Conceptually, it is anticipated that renewals will be handled like Cal Grant renewals with letters sent to potentially eligible students.

If there are funds available for future years, are the age requirements the same?

Once a student is awarded, according to the federal guidelines, eligibility for continued payments can extend up until the age of 23.

Will there be an application filing deadline for next year?

If funding is available for the 2004-05 year, we will establish a priority filing deadline. September 1 has been tentatively established as next year's deadline, but this may change.